Prof. Janelle Wong  
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AAST498V  
Special Topics in Asian American Studies:  
Asian American Religions and Spirituality  
Thursdays 2-4:30  
ARC 1125  
Course website on ELMS

Course Description

Asian Pacific Americans are one of the most religiously diverse racial-ethnic groups in the United States. Hindu temple building, Sikh and Muslim identity post 9/11, evangelical Christian communities, and the representation of Buddhist monks in Kung Fu Panda are just some of the topics explored in this seminar. As a wide-ranging examination of Asian American religious life, this course seeks to expand understanding of the intersection of race and religion in U.S. society through social analysis and social science.

We will engage in an interdisciplinary analysis of the religious traditions, institutions, and experiences of Asians in the U.S. We will look at Asian American spiritual cultures in socio-historical context and examine not only the religious wellsprings from which Asian Americans draw, but also how their beliefs and practices creatively address a changing environment. Students will also learn about race and racism and its relation to Asian American religious identity in several ways, including how Asian American religious identity develops in the U.S. racial context; how Asian American religions test and extend the limits of religious freedom/expression; and the new challenges that Asian American religious subjects encounter in a Post-65, multi-cultural, consumer-oriented society.

In addition, we will analyze the ways that religion creates and sustains particular Asian American communities in the United States; how it intersects with the construction of ethnic and racial identities of Asian Americans; and how it shapes gender among Asian Americans. Critical to our study of Asian American religions is understanding how the experiences of Asian Americans as immigrants, and racial and ethnic minorities in the United States influence Asian American religious practices, communities, theologies and identities.
Course Expectations and Grading Procedures

- Participation. Students should attend all class meetings and be prepared to participate on a substantive and analytic level in discussions of the readings and topics. **More than one missed class meeting without a valid excuse will affect your attendance grade.** If you miss a class meeting, please get the notes from a classmate. Readings should be complete by the date they appear on the syllabus.

- Attendance. According to university policy, absences can be excused for illness, religious observances, participation in University activities at the request of university authorities and compelling circumstances beyond the student's control. If you need to be absent from class to participate in a religious observance, please provide the instructor a list of the dates you will need to be absent by the second day of class. Absences due to illness on the date of exams or the dates assignments are due must be supported by documentation from a medical professional.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation and attendance</td>
<td>= 15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Short Writing Assignments (2-pages)</td>
<td>= 30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 in-class reading quizzes</td>
<td>= 30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research proposal (5-8 pages)</td>
<td>= 25%</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
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Required Textbooks and Readings:


All other required readings available/posted on ELMS.

Class Communication

Announcements regarding class cancellations, room changes, or other issues will be sent via **email and the announcement function in ELMS**. I will use the email address you have associated with **ELMS**. Change your communication settings to allow email through ELMS.

Academic Integrity and the University of Maryland Honor Pledge

Please adhere to the UMD Code of Academic Integrity and Honor Pledge ("I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination."). Cheating or engaging in any form of academic dishonesty will be reported and subject to university policies regarding academic integrity.
According to the UMD Code of Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to:

- **Cheating** (intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise),
- **Plagiarism** (intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise) including writing from other students, websites, and library materials,
- **Fabrications** of any kind (intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise) including false information in requests for assignment or examination extensions, and
- **Facilitating Academic Dishonesty** (intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate any provision of this Code)

For more information on academic integrity, please refer to the Student Honor Council website, [http://www.shc.umd.edu](http://www.shc.umd.edu).

**Creating a Respectful Environment:** AAST values the diversity of its student body and is committed to providing a classroom atmosphere that encourages the equitable participation of all students. At all times students should be respectful of others’ opinions. If you disagree with someone you should express your alternative view using the evidence that led you to your interpretation. Personalized comments, inappropriate language, insults, sleeping, and raised voices are not conducive to learning and will not be tolerated in the classroom. In addition, **cell phone texting or viewing and laptop use other than taking notes are disruptive activities that inhibit students' ability to learn and are to be refrained from in lecture and discussion section. Please place your cell phone on silent or “vibrate” mode while in lecture or discussion section.**

**Student Resources and Arrangements for Students with Disabilities**
The University is legally obligated to provide appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities. The campus's Disability Support Service Office (DSS) works with students and faculty to address a variety of issues ranging from test anxiety to physical and psychological disabilities. If an instructor believes that a student may have a disability, DSS should be consulted (4-7682 or dissup@umd.edu). Note that to receive accommodations, students must first have their disabilities documented by DSS. The office then prepares an Accommodation Letter for course instructors regarding needed accommodations. Students are responsible for presenting this letter to their instructors by the end of the drop/add period.
Services for students in various forms of distress are offered by the Counseling Center and the Mental Health Service in the Health Center. During evenings and weekends, the student

Copyright Notice
All class lectures and other materials are copyrighted and that they may not be reproduced for anything other than personal use without written permission from the instructor.

Emergency protocol
If an emergency occurs that closes the University for an extended period of time, this course will be taught on-line via the ELMS site
Class Schedule and Readings
Come to class with readings for that date complete

Week 1

Thur. 1/29   Class Introduction: What can we learn from studying Asian American religions and Spirituality? 5 assumptions overturned

In class reading (handouts):

Short Writing Assignment #1: Personal reflection paper – Do you consider yourself religious or spiritual? Take 20-30 minutes to write a 2 page autobiography that tells me something about how you came to this class, and which topics on the syllabus interest you most.

Week 2

Thur 2/5   Who are Asian Americans and Can We Understand Asian Americans without Understanding Religion and Spirituality?


Week 3

Thur. 2/12   Key themes in Asian American Religions and Spirituality

Film Screening: Eve and the Fire horse
Short Writing Assignment #2 (due next week): Write a 2-page assessment of the reading for next week (Virtual Orientalism) – Make sure to answer these questions: Which argument in the book did you find most compelling? Which argument do you think needs more support? Do you think the author’s ideas apply only to “Asian religions”? Can you think of other examples from popular culture that confirm or make you question the way the author describes how Asian religions are consumed in the U.S.? Who would you recommend this reading to?

Week 4

Thur. 2/19 Asian American Religions in Popular Culture

Week 5

Thur. 2/26 A Shaman in America

No class meeting: Watch “The Split Horn” (available to stream on-line through UMD library) on your own and post 2 paragraphs about the film by midnight 2/27 (What was your emotional reaction to the film? Would you argue that the filmmaker is pursuing a political agenda?)

Week 6

Thur. 3/5 Immigration, Identity and Religion


Research Proposal Assignment Guidelines Distributed
Week 7

Thur. 3/12  Dominant Trends in a Diverse Religious Landscape: Asian American Christians and the Non-Religious

Demographic Presentation


Week 8

No class meeting -Spring Break

Week 9

Thur. 3/26  New Identity Formations


DRAFT of research proposal due

One-on-one meetings to discuss research proposal drafts

**Week 10**

**Thur. 4/2** The Post-9/11 Context and Race

Film: Divided We Fall


Film review assignment: Write a short essay (2-3-pages) that discusses the ways in which the three films in the class highlight a general theme in the class. If you were going to show this film to a group of students learning about Asian American religions and spiritual life, what would you want them to pay attention to when they view these films and why?

3:30-4:30: One-on-one meetings to discuss research proposal drafts

**Week 11**

**Thur. 4/9**


Park, Julie. 2014. When Diversity Drops: Race, Religion and Affirmative Action in Higher Education. Chapters 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8.

3:30-4:30: One-on-one meetings to discuss research proposal drafts

**Week 12**

**Thur. 4/16** Asian American Religions and the State


Week 13

Thur. 4/16: No class meeting

Short Writing Assignment #3 (due today by 4:30p): What topic is missing from this syllabus? Identify and summarize 2 readings that are not on the syllabus that you think should be on the syllabus. These should be articles from books or journal articles. If you use an on-line source, it should be from a think tank or other research-related institution (if you have a question about your source, get in touch with Prof. Wong)

Week 14

Thur. 4/30    Asian American Religions and Family Practices

Discuss assignment #3 in-class


Week 15

Thur. 5/7    Religion and Imagined Communities


Research proposals due Tuesday, May 12, 10p via ELMS

This syllabus is intended to give the student guidance in what may be covered during the semester and will be followed as closely as possible. However, the professor reserves the right to modify, supplement and make changes as the course needs arise.